

# Department of Human Services

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## Foster mom a victim, ministers say

February 12, 2007

By JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Ministers affiliated with the Rev. Al Sharpton said Monday that Charlsie Adams-Rogers, the former foster mother charged with manslaughter in the beating death of a 2-year-old foster boy in her Detroit home in August is "the victim of public anger against the foster care system."

The National Action Network Leaders headed locally by the Revs. Charles E. Williams, Maurice L. Rudds and Horace L. Sheffield III, held a brief news conference outside the Frank Murphy Hall of Justice in Detroit around 9 a.m. Monday shortly before Adams-Rogers was arraigned.

Williams said the charges against Adams-Rogers, who also is an ordained minister, were politically motivated because authorities have "charged only one person out of the foster care system as a whole" with the Aug. 16 death of 2-year-old Isaac Lethbridge.

Adams-Rogers is charged with involuntary manslaughter and second- and fourth-degree child abuse in the beating of Isaac and physical abuse of his 4-year-old sister in her home under the theory that, as a licensed foster parent, she is ultimately responsible for harm that may come to foster children in her care.

Adams-Rogers, who is free on bond, was bound over for trial last week and faced arraignment Monday in Wayne County Circuit Court in a hearing to determine which circuit judge will oversee her case.

Her attorney, Warren Harris, said it is wrong to hold Adams-Rogers responsible for Isaac's death of blunt force trauma, a killing apparently committed by another person. Officials said he had bruises over several areas of his body, had a broken collar bone and suffered second degree burns on his chest and abdomen consistent with someone placing a hot iron over his clothing.

Isaac and his sister were placed in Adams-Rogers home by the Lula Belle Stewart Center, a non-profit agency that formerly provided foster care services for about 100 abused or neglected children.

Harris said that during the 49 days Isaac was in Adams-Rogers' care she took the boy to a doctor three times because of unexplained bruising on his body. She said Monday that she did not suspect that anyone in her home was abusing the boy.

Previously, Adams-Rogers blamed her 12-year-old adopted daughter, a girl with serious behavioral and psychological problems, with the boy's death. A juvenile court judge late last year terminated Adams-Rogers' parental rights to that girl and a 1-year-old baby she also had adopted because of her failure to ensure the safety of children in her northwest Detroit home.

As she has from the beginning, Adams-Rogers said Monday that Isaac's death was an accident and that "I did everything possible to protect the children in my home."

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Published February 11, 2007

## Baby, killed by stepdad, lacked care from start

Records fault child's mom for possible neglect

By Kevin Grasha  
Lansing State Journal

Loretta Moy, whose husband was convicted of killing her 13-month-old daughter, may have neglected the infant by "not properly caring for the child" and leaving her in the care of people who were "inappropriate caregivers," court documents reveal.

The 21-year-old Lansing woman left her daughter, Anishia - when she was 1 month old - in the care of her biological mother, whose own parental rights to Loretta had been terminated, according to Ingham County family court records obtained by the Lansing State Journal.

Several months later, Loretta's aunt was seen smacking Anishia in the face "because she wanted a bottle," the documents reveal. At the time, Loretta and her husband, Steve Lee Moy - who was Anishia's stepfather - were living with the aunt and her boyfriend, a registered sex offender.

Loretta and Steve Moy, according to the documents, "were both substantiated for risk of harm of (Anishia)."

Child Protective Services workers were investigating the family after receiving calls concerning Anishia's treatment.

Steve Moy, 39, was convicted Feb. 2 of first-degree felony murder and child abuse in connection with Anishia's death in August 2006. He will be sentenced next month to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

### Baby born in November

In mid-November 2006, Loretta Moy gave birth to a girl fathered by Steve. That child was removed



Anishia Ilene Angelina Moy

### What's next

- Steve Lee Moy, who was convicted of first-degree felony murder and first-degree child abuse in the death of his 13-month-old stepdaughter, will be sentenced March 7 to life in prison without the possibility of parole.
- A trial, at which he is expected to lose parental rights to his infant daughter, is scheduled for Monday.

from Loretta's care days after she was born and is temporarily in the custody of the state Department of Human Services.

It is unclear where the child has been placed.

A trial regarding the termination of Steve Moy's parental rights is scheduled for Monday.

DHS spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet would not say whether the agency would seek to terminate Loretta Moy's parental rights.

Sorbet said she could not discuss specifics of the case because of privacy regulations.

Loretta Moy now is allowed supervised visits, according to court records.

### **DHS scrutinized**

In August, the Office of Children's Ombudsman began an investigation into how DHS child protection workers handled the Moy case. That investigation could result in recommendations to the department, said Michael Harmon, a supervising investigator with the ombudsman's office. He would not discuss details of the case.

"We are not finished. We are waiting for more evidence to come in," he said, adding he could not say when the investigation might be completed.

Sorbet said when a child the DHS has been involved with dies, the department initiates its own review of the case "to see if anything could have been done differently."

According to testimony during Steve Moy's trial, Anishia died from internal injuries - including five broken ribs and a lacerated liver - caused by blunt force. She also may have been suffocated.

### **Mom saw no bruises**

Testimony revealed Anishia had dozens of unexplained bruises on her body that were days or weeks old.

She also had arm and wrist fractures that had healed.

Loretta Moy testified she bathed Anishia the night before she died, but denied seeing bruises or any injuries on her daughter's body.

Steve and Loretta married in January 2005, a few months after meeting at a homeless shelter. They were living with friends in a rented house in Lansing when Anishia was killed.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or [kgrasha@lsj.com](mailto:kgrasha@lsj.com).



## Girls' short lives mourned

Mom charged as their killer

February 11, 2007

BY GINA DAMRON

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

In delicate white caskets lined with white fabric and surrounded by sprays of pink and white roses and teddy bears, two little girls rest.

The lives of the bubbly, affectionate sisters, Alexandra and Ashley Kukla, were played out in photos lining the room on poster boards -- and in the memories of their loved ones.

The Shelby Township funeral home was filled with tears, pain and anger of mourners.

Nearly 300 people listened in the Wujek-Calcaterra & Sons Funeral Home as the Rev. Jerry Weinzierl spoke gently about the girls who were stabbed to death in their Macomb Township mobile home Feb. 4. Their mother, Jennifer Kukla, has been charged with two counts of first-degree murder in their deaths.

Alexandra was 8. Ashley would've turned 6 this month.

"They knew the Lord was with them," said Weinzierl, of Grace Christian Church in Warren. "As they entered into heaven, they knew."

Alexandra, sweetly called "Lexa" by her family, was dressed in a cream-colored turtleneck sweater, looking toward her baby sister, Ashley, whose soft, golden hair brushed her face.

The girls were students at Ojibwa Elementary School in Macomb Township -- Alexandra in second grade, Ashley in kindergarten.

Alexandra "really watched out for" Ashley "and protected her," Weinzierl said.

Kukla is being held in the Macomb County Jail and didn't attend the funeral.

Matt Vesich, whose son is engaged to Kukla's sister Elizabeth Lawrie, said he remembers how excited the girls got when Kukla came home from work. And how much she seemed to care about them.

"She loved them," he said. "She did."

Family members didn't want to talk to the media.

But as he stood outside, taking a few drags on a cigarette, Alexandra's father, Paul Hein, said: "It's been all too hard ... too much way too soon."

Ashley's father, Jeffery Brownlow, 44, who is in the Carson Correctional Facility for failure to pay child support and operating a vehicle while intoxicated, didn't attend the funeral, but was brought down to visit his daughter early Saturday.

Musician Uncle Kracker -- aka Matt Shafer -- has said he would foot the bill of about \$900 for Brownlow's furlough, according to the Michigan Department of Corrections.

Contact **GINA DAMRON** at 248-351-3293 or gdamron@freepress

*Alexandra and Ashley will be cremated and interred at Resurrection Cemetery in Clinton Township. .com.*

PUBLISHED: Saturday, February 10, 2007 Singer pays for dad to come to funeral

## **Uncle Kracker steps up to help family of slain girls**

By Chad Halcom  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Rapper-turned-crossover musician Uncle Kracker will foot the bill for a Macomb County man to travel on furlough from prison today and say his goodbyes to his young daughter, killed last weekend in a Macomb Township double homicide.

Until Friday it was believed that family finances would prevent Jeffrey Brownlow, 44, from obtaining the 12-hour furlough from Carson City Correctional Facility, to attend the funeral of 5-year-old daughter Ashley Kukla and her half-sister, Alexandra Kukla.

Both girls died Sunday in a brutal knife attack at the home of their mother, Jennifer Anne Kukla, who is now jailed without bond on two counts of first-degree murder awaiting a preliminary court hearing next week. Brownlow, father of Kukla's younger daughter, is serving 18 months to four years in prison on an unrelated drunken driving and felony non-support matter.

"If money was the only obstacle, I just didn't want to see the guy miss his chance to say good-bye to his kid," said Kracker, also known as Matt Shafer of Harrison Township. "I didn't know what he was in for, but I couldn't think it would be a reason why he shouldn't go. She was still his flesh and blood. And I'm glad to see this is happening for him now."

Officials notified Brownlow about his daughter's death earlier this week, but regulations in the Michigan Department of Corrections only allow furloughs if an inmate's family shoulders the costs for employee overtime and transportation expenses. Brownlow's family plans to attend funeral services for the children today, but was unable to raise the roughly \$900 costs for his furlough.

"Thank God for him (Kracker). Without him they wouldn't have got the chance to get this money together in time," said James Galen, an attorney with a family connection to the Brownlows who had been trying to obtain his furlough. "My wife is on the phone with them right now, and his (Brownlow's) mother is crying out of control, she couldn't be any happier. It's unbelievable."

The musician and his brother-manager, Mike Shafer, both said they read about the Kukla case and the Brownlow connection in a newspaper article over breakfast Friday in the Mount Clemens area. Moved by the family's plight, Kracker -- who has daughters of his own -- contacted local attorney Ted Metry to try and arrange some help.

"And now it's done, apparently," Metry said after speaking with corrections officials in Lansing and at the Carson City facility. "At first we didn't have the volunteers, but two people will work the shift or overtime for it as long as my client makes the payment for it on time. And that's fine."

Visitation was Friday and funeral services are today at 11 a.m. for the Kukla children at Wujek-Calcaterra & Sons Funeral Home in Shelby Township.

It was unclear whether Brownlow will attend that service or have a private viewing with his daughter and some immediate family separately; Corrections Department spokesman Russ Marlan said the department cannot reveal the exact times of Brownlow's travel and visitation for security reasons.

"The misconduct incidents on his record are all 'minor misconduct.' No record of a major misconduct, or we probably couldn't do this," Marlan said. "But there's nothing to suggest the prisoner is violent or a security risk."

Ashley Kukla, 5, and half-sister Alexandra Marie Kukla, 8, died Sunday morning of multiple stab wounds to the neck region along with three family dogs and a pet mouse at the Kukla family's modest Macomb Township mobile home.

Their mother, Jennifer Anne Kukla, remains at the Macomb County Jail without bond awaiting a preliminary examination next week in the case.

Police and prosecutors claim Kukla, 30, a single mother of two living on Chevalier Drive and a former associate manager at a local McDonald's, took a set of four large knives and fatally stabbed both her children as well as a Pomeranian dog and two puppies plus a pet mouse in the home early Sunday morning.

She then allegedly remained in the house some 11 hours until a sister of the defendant stopped by the home to check on her welfare; there the sister found an open door and Kukla emerging from inside to tell her she'd harmed the girls, prompting a call to 911 around 6 p.m.

If convicted as charged, Kukla would face mandatory life in prison without parole.

Brownlow, 44, an ex-boyfriend of Kukla, is serving his sentence for a felony drunken-driving matter and a felony failure to pay child support involving a different child who is now grown. His earliest release date is February of next year according to prison officials.

Kukla had briefly lost custody of her children once before to Child Protective Services in an environmental neglect case due to the living conditions at her home over four years ago, officials have said; but she met the requirements then to be reunited with her children.

Getting financial support for them may have been a tougher matter. Paul Hein, father of Kukla's older child Alexandra, was ordered jailed 30 days in lieu of \$2,250 for non-payment of child support.

But jail records indicate Hein, who went into custody Dec. 18, obtained his release on Dec. 20 by furnishing the money. That payment was to go to the Macomb County Friend of the Court and get processed through the state Disbursement Unit in Lansing, then forwarded to the Kukla family -- but officials could not confirm a payment had reached the mother.

Kracker also said Friday that the Kukla girls' slayings were "a tragedy" and he would have liked to attend the funeral services for them as well, but he had other obligations including a family matter of his own, and was simply glad to help Brownlow attend.

Contributions can still be made to the Alexandria and Ashley Memorial Fund, c/o Warren Bank, 38880 Garfield Road, Clinton Township MI 48038.

A funeral service will be held at 11 a.m. today at Wujek-Calcaterra & Sons location near 25 Mile Road and Van Dyke. Cremation will follow at Resurrection Cemetery in Clinton Township.



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## Mother pleads guilty in tooth decay case

EASTON, Pa. The mother of a five-year-old boy who had to have a dozen rotting teeth pulled has pleaded guilty to child endangerment.

The Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, woman entered the guilty plea yesterday. Sentencing is set for next month.

According to court records, county workers investigating a child abuse claim against the woman last February noticed her son's badly decayed teeth.

The oral surgeon who removed 12 teeth says they had been decaying for two or three years.

The boy was placed in foster care.

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## **Child Abuse Council accepting nominations for service award**

GRAND LEDGE — Since its inception in 1985, the Child Abuse Prevention Council of Eaton County has presented an annual community award recognizing an outstanding person or organization in Eaton County for their contribution and service to children during the year.

The past 21 recipients of this award come from a variety of backgrounds from a grandmother, a foster parent, a community volunteer caring for children, a judge, a police officer and a local business owner, just to name a few.

While the backgrounds of these remarkable individuals are very different they all had one thing in common — they made a difference in the lives of area children.

The Child Abuse Council is now accepting nominations from the community for the 2006 Service To Children Award. The deadline for applications is Feb.17. The award will be presented at a special Community Breakfast in April for Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Nomination forms can be obtained by calling (517) 622-4543 or e-mailing [capcouncil@comcast.net](mailto:capcouncil@comcast.net) or visiting [www.capcouncil.com](http://www.capcouncil.com).

Please mail (or email) your nomination forms to: Selection Committee, CAPCO, P.O. Box 301, Grand Ledge, Mich., 48837.

— *From the Child Abuse Prevention Council of Eaton County.*

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Published February 11, 2007

## Children's Trust Fund officers named for 2007

LANSING — The Children's Trust Fund of Michigan Board of Directors recently named officers for 2007. Nancy Moody continues as chairwoman of the board, an appointment made by Governor Jennifer M. Granholm.

Others elected to leadership positions include Anita Fox as vice chair, Carol Wolenberg as secretary and Paul Shaheen as secretary. Committee chairs are appointed by Moody with the consensus of the board.

For 2007, the following individuals will lead these committees:

- Moody will chair the Executive Committee.
- Wolenberg will chair the Finance Committee.
- DHS Director Marianne Udow will chair the Audit Committee.
- Scott Stevenson will chair the Marketing and Fund Development Committee.
- Shaheen and Rebecca Bahar-Cook will co-chair the Program Committee.

CTF provides grants for public education, training and technical assistance, and funds a network of local, community-based child abuse prevention programs and services across the state. It is the only statewide nonprofit organization solely dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Michigan.

Established by state law in 1982, the CTF is guided by a 15-member board of directors, 10 of whom are appointed by the governor with advice and consent of the Senate. CTF does not receive state appropriations and is funded by interest income from a restricted trust fund and direct donations, including the Children's License Plate and an income tax check-off box.

For more information about the Children's Trust Fund, go to

[www.michigan.gov/ctf](http://www.michigan.gov/ctf). For more information about the Department of Human Services, go to [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs).

— *From Michigan Department of Human Services.*



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## Young murderer opts for more conservative look

Associated Press

DETROIT - A man recently released from prison after serving his sentence for a murder committed at age 11 has opted for a more conservative look as the beginning of a quest for a new job.

Nathaniel Abraham, who took his first steps of freedom last month in a cream pinstripe suit, red shoes and a fedora, on Friday modeled black, blue and brown suits for his mother and a judge, the Detroit Free Press reported.

Abraham, 21, was at the Michigan WORKS! building to pick up suits through the Jackets for Jobs Inc. program, which provides interview-quality clothing for men and women having tough financial times, or ex-prison offenders.

"I love pinstripes," Abraham's mother, Gloria Abraham said, as he donned a navy blue suit with stripes.

"Your mother has good taste," said Alison Vaughn, founder of Jackets for Jobs.

Abraham said: "She gets it from me."

Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Craig Strong assisted Abraham.

"He got embarrassed in court," Strong said referring to Abraham's previous courtroom attire. "That one picture is worth a thousand words and the world is looking at him. That was a bad start."

Abraham left Friday with three suits, three dress shirts, several ties and a sports jacket, the newspaper said.

Abraham was released from state custody Jan. 18. He had served a juvenile sentence for second-degree murder for the 1997 shooting of 18-year-old Ronnie Greene in Pontiac. He now lives in the Bay City area.

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February 12, 2007

## 'My soul has the Lord,' Abraham says

Freed killer gives faith testimonial to Detroit church, which has pledged spiritual and job-seeking support.

**Jennifer Mrozowski / The Detroit News**

**DETROIT** -- Nathaniel Abraham stood before hundreds of parishioners at Hartford Memorial Baptist Church Sunday and told the group who pledged to mentor him that he would not let them down.

"I feel like I'm loved in here," he told the audience before reading a poem, which he said summarized his feelings over the years.

The congregation said it would support Abraham, 21, who was released last month after being convicted for second-degree murder and serving nearly eight years of juvenile rehabilitation for killing 18-year-old Ronnie Greene outside a Pontiac party store in 1997. His case drew national attention because Abraham was 11 years old at the time of the shooting death, and he became the youngest person in Michigan tried as an adult for murder.

Abraham, who attended the service with about a dozen members of his family, including his mother, moved the crowd with his poem. At points, he drew applause and brought members to their feet at the conclusion.

"I stand before you reformed, not perfect," Abraham said. "I've disappointed one -- the devil himself because I am not his craft. I believe my maker and wipe the devil off me as my sweat."

Parishioner John W. Cromer Jr., corporate developer for a private employment service called America Works of Detroit for job seekers considered hard-to-serve, said the Rev. Charles G. Adams asked him to reach out to Abraham last week. Abraham recently drew a flurry of media attention and criticism for leaving the courthouse on the day of his release in a splashy cream and pink pin-striped suit with pink shoes and tie.

On Sunday, Abraham was dressed in a dark-colored pin-striped suit with a red tie. He made reference in his poem to the frenzy that surrounded his day of release, saying, "My suit may have flavor, but my soul has the Lord."

Cromer, who said he is grateful that Hartford Memorial Baptist Church embraced him during his own prison sentence for retail fraud and shoplifting, said the church also wants to help Abraham.

"We're not giving him any handouts," he said. "He is very talented. He is very gifted. We're going to mentor him and help him become a productive member of society."

Cromer wouldn't say whether any money will be given to Abraham, who would not speak to media on the advice of his attorney, Daniel Bagdade. During the service, Adams said he had donations to pass to Abraham.

Bagdade said the church promised to offer emotional and theological support and wants to help him find employment.

He summed up Abraham's feelings: "He is so excited so many people have opened their arms to him."

Cromer, who said work should be the central policy behind reducing crime, incarceration and recidivism, said Abraham is excited to buy a car and find a job.

Stephanie Brown, a parishioner from Redford, said she wondered whether Greene's family also is being remembered, but she said she thought Abraham needed the assistance.

"It's rough to come out of the prison system and integrate back into society," she said. "I pray for him."

*You can reach Jennifer Mrozowski at (313) 222-2269 or [jmrozowski@detnews.com](mailto:jmrozowski@detnews.com).*

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Monday, FEB 12, 2007

## Has Nathaniel Abraham paid his debt to society?

A whirlwind of controversy evolves around the recent release of Nathaniel Abraham. Many have criticized various aspects of Abraham's release, ranging from the rehabilitative services he receives including free rent, full college tuition, to the attire he wore to court. This hysteria begs the question of why would his release, since he has been under the jurisdiction of the Oakland County Circuit Court, for the past eight years, still cause ire.

Tragically, at the tender age of 11, Nathaniel Abraham shot and killed 18 year old, Ronnie Greene near the Sunset Plaza Party Store in Pontiac, Michigan. As a direct consequence of a "get tough on kids" policy, the Michigan legislature enacted a 1997 law that allowed children of any age to be prosecuted as an adult in a serious felony case. Consequently, Nathaniel Abraham became the state's youngest killer. The case set precedent and even led to a watershed decision on the admissibility of child confessions.

Notwithstanding the fact that murder is the most tragic of tragedies, he is not the only child who ever killed someone. Perhaps those who are troubled by his release should contemplate the distinction between the juvenile justice system and the adult criminal justice system. The juvenile justice system, which has monitored Nathaniel Abraham's progress for the last eight years, is designed to rehabilitate wayward youth. Historically, in the early 1900's in Michigan, the legislature developed the Parents Patria Doctrine where the Juvenile Judge became the "substitute" parent for the child to monitor, "the care, custody, and control that the child should have received in his own home," so that the child could receive "individualized treatment" necessary to change his or her behavior so the child would grow up to be a successful adult.

Conversely, the adult criminal justice system is punitive, designed to punish rather than rehabilitate. Hence, those subjected to the adult criminal justice system

are molded into hardened criminals, brutalized and prone to recidivism, repetitive criminal violations.

A salient issue is whether Nathaniel Abraham has been rehabilitated. The prosecutor and the victim's sister, contend that Nathaniel Abraham lacks remorse and has not been fully rehabilitated. In fact, he has had problems with his temper while in a maximum security facility. On the other hand, educationally, Nathaniel Abraham has obtained a G.E.D., and

plans to attend Delta College. He plans to engage in gainful employment as a maintenance worker at a manufacturing facility in Bay City. He even aspires to be a rapper, a career that many young Black youth use as a means to elevate themselves culturally, economically, and socially. Ironically, a lot of rappers boast about “killing” people.

Nathaniel Abraham was maligned for his choice of attire that he wore to court—a black fur coat, ivory fedora hat, and ivory and hot-pink pinstriped suit with matching pink tie and shoes. Arguably he was dressed like the “Pimp from Pontiac,” and played into the negative stereotypes that many have of not only him, but any young Black urban male. In conclusion, hopefully, Nathaniel Abraham will become a productive member of society and defy these negative stereotypes, and make a peaceful and positive difference in the world.

Those critical of Nathaniel Abraham should become more proactive than reactive on the issue of crime. Specifically, instead of condoning his crime and clothes after the fact, society should place more emphasis on the social pathology which leads to violent behavior including community apathy and indifference, indigent families, lack of moral values, lack of positive male and family guidance, racism, socially disparate educational resources, violent cultural norms in movies, music, television, and video games that children are exposed to.

*Jermaine A. Wyrick Is an Attorney For the Law Offices of Jermaine A. Wyrick P.L.L.C. His areas of practice are Criminal Defense Personal Injury, and Police Misconduct. He can be reached at 313.964.8950, Or by E-Mail: Attyjaw1@Ameritech.net.*



## New juvenile sex offender plan saves \$\$\$

Sunday, February 11, 2007

**CATHY HENG**

**FOR THE SAGINAW NEWS**

MIDLAND -- A year-old initiative to rehabilitate and treat juvenile sex offenders by keeping them in Midland County has saved nearly \$300,000, a judge says.

Previously, officials sent such youths to residential treatment facilities far away, said Probate Judge Dorene S. Allen. The distance often severed them from parents or siblings, and the young people would return to an unchanged situation, increasing the likelihood of recidivism, she said.

Trained workers at the county's Juvenile Care Center worked with four juvenile sex offenders last year in community-based treatment. Foster parents receive special instruction, and court officials outline services for the youth and family. Treatment plans involve family assessments, youth therapy, sexual education, in-home treatment, crisis intervention and monthly meetings with professionals.

Midland County has about 10 juvenile sex offenders at any one time; some still require residential treatment, Allen said.

"There are no guarantees for youth rehabilitation," Allen said, "but the juveniles are receiving effective, healing treatment. This allows the youth and their families to rehabilitate in their own home and community."

She has calculated that treating the four youths in the county saved \$295,360.

Allen provided Board of Commissioners members with the example of "Edward," who came to the court as a neglect ward at 6. His family history included domestic violence and possible molestation at 3. After the court terminated parental rights, another family adopted him. Violent behavior and sexually inappropriate behavior toward siblings led to placement in a treatment facility by 10.

"Edward was then charged with two counts of criminal sexual conduct and two counts of assault and battery at age 12. He is now at Maxey Boys Training School for three years and is 15. He will remain in the system to age 18, three more years," said Allen.

As of December, his total cost for care came to \$443,745.56, split between Midland County and the state, the judge said.

"A local (juvenile sex offender) program may have been able to address these issues earlier, keeping Edward in a stable home environment so as not to become institutionalized," Allen said.

Residential placement averages 550 days at a rate of \$263 per day, for total cost of \$144,650. The county treatment is 365 days at an average cost of \$194 per day, for a total of \$70,810. v

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## Working toward better foster care

February 11, 2007

They came from around the state but shared a common desire to make foster care more effective for young people and their families.

Three former foster youths. A foster mom and a retired foster mom. A social worker. The heads of two private agencies that provide services for young people after they are separated from their biological parents. The director of the Office of Family Advocate within the Department of Human Services. From Westland, Big Rapids, Lansing, Detroit, they gathered at the Free Press for a conversation about the system they all know so well.

Though the cases and lives they deal with are complicated, and the myths they encounter are infuriating, group members offered solutions that were powerfully simple: Listen, especially to the children and parents and families whose lives are turned upside down. Withhold judgment -- at least until you know what you are talking about.

And get involved. Please get involved. Whether it's asking if folks are OK when a baby is crying, mentoring a young person, shepherding a youth group, giving of your time, talents or money. You don't have to adopt a child or become a foster parent to make a difference. Just open your heart and your mind and your time.

Yes, the cash-strapped state needs to put more funds into the overstretched child welfare system. And surely the different agencies that provide shelter, health care, counseling, education and legal representation for the kids need to work together better.

But everyone -- whether touched by the system or not -- can do a little something. It starts with paying attention.

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## Ways to repair foster care

Participants call for more support

February 11, 2007

There is no invitation sent out to any child to say, "Come to foster care." It happens as a result of something. ...

The courage it takes to become "normalized" is never promoted. You have this "foster care" label on it, and it's viewed as a detriment, when it's probably the strongest statement you can make emotionally, to say: "I left home, which is a traumatic thing, not of my own volition, and came into a situation and I was successful." Most of us couldn't do that. And these kids do it every day.

**Michael Williams, 51, Westland.** *President and CEO of Orchards Children's Services agency. Former mayor of Albion.*

Unfortunately, the public perception is we take away kids just to make money -- I hear that just about every day. And that foster parents are in it for the money -- I hear that just about every day and it couldn't be further from the truth. ... The folks who work in the system ... they care tremendously, they give of their life, they're not making a lot of money, they have a high-stress job, the consequence of error is unparalleled. They go home at night, and they have to worry about whether kids live or not. Not too many people have to do that.

**Steve Yager, 44, Woodland.** *Director since 2002 of the Office of Family Advocate in the Department of Human Services.*

I think now the system is learning to be honest and really looking at things from a different perspective. ... When there's a major decision that's happening, there's a youth there. ... Because that's the most important thing in the whole meeting is the youth and what they have to say, because they're the ones really dealing with the problems. Most people who work for the system have never even been around foster kids. So now we've learned that these kids are the ones who know the best part of this thing, they know the ins and outs ... And I think those are the type of people that DHS and some of the private agencies are starting to recognize and utilize.

**Maurice Webb, 21, Detroit and Big Rapids.** *Former foster youth, pursuing social work degree at Ferris State, DHS intern.*

We need more caseworkers, and we need the caseloads to be lower. ... I have a caseload of 23. ... It's not just visiting the child every month; it's servicing their families, report writing, preparation for court, telephone calls, dealing with a concern that foster parents may have. ... I may get a call for an emergency replacement, so all of that is on hold while I tend to that. ... To lower the caseload would bring in more quality time for those people to be serviced.

**Darla Kelly, 47, Detroit.** *Social worker with Ennis for 10 years.*

When the child comes into the system, they have the stigma that they are the foster child, they are different from everyone else. But we're asked to treat them as if they're our own. ...

I think that if they had respite services that were available, where foster parents, based on the child's needs, would be entitled to a vacation, a weekend, a night out at the movies. I think that if there were some sort of crisis intervention system, where I'm getting kind of stressed out, "Can you tell me if I'm handling this right, doing what is right with this child?" ... When you're a foster parent, you don't get (a break). The only way you get that is to call and say: "I think I want you to pick up the children" -- which is an interruption in the children's lives.

**Michelle Adams-Calloway, 52, Detroit.** *Foster mother for 23 years, with three foster kids now. Adopted three special needs children.*

This is a little bit different than any family, any parent, any kids. You're talking about little kids,

4 years old, 5 years old, that adults can't handle sometimes. I've had little preschoolers that nobody would baby-sit for because they were that difficult. And licensing laws, you can't get the teenage girl down the street to baby-sit like you can for your own.

**Carol Coccia**, 67, *Brownstown Township. Foster mother for 28 years, mentor for teenage girl in group home. Member, state Foster Care Review Board Advisory Committee.*

Get more involved. ... See how much you can help out by just being involved in a youth board or adopting a child or just donating funds and saying, "How is it being put to use?" When you go to some of these events and you see how proud these kids are to be actually involved ... and just to feel as one with a lot of other people there and not have to feel on the outside and have to hide yourself.

**Taron Turner**, 25, *Westland. Former foster youth, adopted his two brothers, ages 17 and 16. Pursuing master's degree in vehicle design and manufacturing administration.*

We don't even engage the families well enough. ... We don't engage and ask the kids enough what they want and what they need to make these things happen. In my 42 years, we always come up with cookie cutters -- those cookie cutters have great pieces to them, but they're not necessarily the best thing for all of them.

It's not one size fits all, and we've been doing that in this state ever since I've been here.

**Bob Ennis**, 63, *Byron. President, Ennis Center for Children. More than 42 years in child care field.*

In order to get a system that is going to be healthy not just for the youth, but for foster parents, agencies, all the way down, it has to be a total, national reform. It can't just be a little seed here, a little seed there. We have to go from the top and work our way down, because going from the bottom up ... we're not getting anywhere. ...

People from the outside of foster care looking in will never be able to know what it's like to be taken from your home, where you've been rooted. Some people have been in the same house 22 years -- and imagine having 22 homes in your 22 years on Earth. A lot of people can't feel, don't know what that anguish is like to have to replant yourself and uproot yourself every time that you're moving. ... A lot of people who are well adjusted ... we took it upon ourselves to say we're going to make it. ...

I did a presentation where I said it's hard to be a foster youth in college. ... And I heard somebody smugly say in the back, "I had to get a job while I was in school, why can't they?" And it's a difference between you're working and you know you have someone you can go to and you're working and you don't have anyone to go to and your priority is where I'm going to sleep that night. ... For those of you who think it's easy to have a job and have a roof over your head, try doing it when you don't know anybody you can call and get money from.

**Jessica Lindsey**, 21, *Detroit. Former foster youth. President of the National Foster Youth Advisory Council.*

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Published February 11, 2007

## **State seeks volunteers for Foster Care board in county**

LANSING — The State Court Administrative Office of the Michigan Supreme Court is seeking volunteers to serve on the Eaton County Foster Care Review Board.

The Michigan Legislature established the citizen's Foster Care Review Board Program in 1984 in an effort to improve children's foster care programs throughout the state.

The five-to seven-member boards meet one day each month to review a representative sample of cases of children who have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care due to abuse or neglect.

At these reviews, board members interview parents, foster parents, caseworkers, attorneys, and other interested parties who may be involved in planning for the ward.

Advisory recommendations are formulated and mailed to the court, child welfare agency, prosecuting attorney, parents, and other interested parties.

The purpose of the review is to ensure that all involved agencies, including the court, have established a permanency plan for the ward; that progress is being made toward achieving permanency; and that the children are being well cared for while in the foster care system.

The Foster Care Review Boards are comprised of citizens who represent a broad cross-section of their communities. The program is seeking volunteers who have demonstrated leadership in other settings.

Minorities and men are especially encouraged to apply. Employees of the Department of Human Services, family courts, or private child placement agencies are prohibited by law from serving on Foster Care Review Boards.

Each volunteer who is selected must attend a two-day orientation training for new volunteers in Lansing on April 19-20. This training is a requirement to serve on a board.

All board members subsequently attend a annual two-day training conference, which is held in early November. Expenses for these training's are reimbursed.

The Eaton County Foster Care Review Board is part of a multi-county board in the mid-Michigan area. Members of multi-county boards would be required to travel to two different locations for board reviews.

Citizens interested in becoming a board member for the Foster Care Review Board should call (517) 373-1956 for an application.

The deadline for receiving applications is Jan. 31, and interviews with prospective candidates will take place in January and early February 2007.

Traverse City Record Eagle

February 9, 2007

## Families wanted

I appreciate the letter of [Amos Graves \(Feb. 4\)](#), who correctly pointed out there are many children in our own community seeking their "forever families" through adoption. There are in fact 4,000 children in Michigan in foster care as permanent wards of the state who have no one — no parents, grandparents or other relatives — willing or able to provide them a home.

These children are called "special needs," not because they have any physical or mental disabilities, but because they are members of a minority, children who have siblings and would like to stay together, or children over age 8.

When people think of adoption they tend not to think first about adopting these children. Many of them have had traumatic pasts, including physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse or neglect.

But most, despite these terrible starts to life, want nothing more than families who will love them, help them heal and give them a chance at a better future. If you talk with one of them, you'll see a light inside that shines at the very thought.

If you've ever considered being a foster or adoptive parent, Child and Family Services can help answer your questions. Call (231) 946 8975.

Gina Aranki

Traverse City

The writer is marketing and public relations director, Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan.

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## Keeping foster siblings together

Proposed legislation would allow Iowa siblings in foster care to visit each other, even if they have been split up in different homes

By JENNIFER JACOBS  
REGISTER STAFF WRITER

February 11, 2007

**STORY CHAT:** 4 Comments

When 16-year-old Kayla Pettit was placed in foster care at age 8, she was split up from her siblings.

She didn't see her younger sister again for six years.

And she hasn't seen her little brother since.

Now Pettit and other Iowa foster youths are lobbying state lawmakers for legislation that would legally guarantee children the right to visit each other if there's no choice but to divide them up into separate foster homes.

Iowa would be one of the few states in the nation to have such a law.

"Most (states) would say 'We try to do that already,' " said Jerry Foxhoven, director of the Middleton Center for Children's Rights at Drake University.

"The young people we've worked with are saying states need to do more than try," Foxhoven said. "They want to know why they're not being given regular visitation with their siblings, and they think foster parents need training to make sure those visits happen."

On any given day in Iowa, about 5,000 children are in foster care.

Pettit described having a desperate feeling, worrying where her siblings were and if they were faring well.

"I'd ask about them, but no one could tell me about them," she said. "It hurt to the point that I kind of think I was doing bad."

She lashed out by being disrespectful to the adults

### today's headlines

- Majority fault firms for illicit hires
- Inmate let out for nonexistent funeral back in jail 11:46 am
- Transportation board meets with legislators today 9:12 am
- Small schools gun for big payoff

**JUSTIN HAYWORTH/THE REGISTER**

Kayla Pettit, 16, dissolved into negative behavior after she, her sister and her brother were split up into different foster homes. She finally received a letter from her sister, years later, and broke down sobbing and screaming, according to her foster mom, Terri Bailey, who helped Kayla get in touch with her siblings. "She grabbed me and I could barely breathe," when she received the letter, Bailey said.

### related content

- Judge in Polk County lets foster kids go to hearings

### Rights for children in foster care

**WHAT'S PROPOSED:** A bill that says it is the state's intent that siblings should be placed together in foster care, but if that's not possible, siblings must be allowed to visit each other.

**WHAT'S HAPPENED:** Both Republicans and Democrats have signed off as co-sponsors, including Senate Minority Leader Mary Lundby and Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal.

**WHAT'S NEXT:** The proposed legislation will be introduced soon. If it passes, it would take effect in July.

ADVERTIS



New shoe  
bounces into  
the heart  
of Iowa!



ZOOM

**JUSTIN HAYWORTH/THE REGISTER**

Sean and Gabrielle Maudlin and two of their siblings were split up when they were placed in foster care. Sean and Gabrielle were recently reunited.

in her life, by running away, by drinking, and by stealing everything from makeup to a car, she said. Pettit ended up in a juvenile home, then in a new foster home in Norwalk.

Her foster mom, Terri Bailey, figured out which state workers had handled her siblings' cases, and reached out to them.

When a letter from Pettit's 15-year-old sister arrived in January, "she grabbed me and I could barely breathe," Bailey recalled. "Oh, my gosh - tears, jumping up and down, screaming."

Pettit, who is now getting mostly B grades at Norwalk High School and wants to eventually own her own business, also got her first letter from her 13-year-old brother, who has been adopted. It arrived earlier this month.

Reporter Jennifer Janeczko Jacobs can be reached at (515) 284-8127 or [jejacobs@dmreg.com](mailto:jejacobs@dmreg.com)

## STORYCHAT

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### Reader Comment

Posted by: **Kiwibred**  
on Sun Feb 11, 2007  
11:18 pm

I read recently that Iowa has one of the highest rates for removing children from their families and by that I mean extended families. It is considered an abusive and unnecessary level of separation of families.

Perhaps it is also timely to make changes in this arena as well. I know the system is overloaded but the lack of understanding or caring that is needed in regards to separating families appears to be high in Iowa.

Hopefully this area will also be addressed and less families split unnecessarily. Poor kids, they lose everything because of all the adults around them.

### How about people who have had siblings adopted?

Posted by: **Li'lBeaver**  
on Sun Feb 11, 2007  
8:29 pm

This sounds like a very good idea, now if we could just get all of Iowa's adoption records opened, it would open the door to help people like myself who found out fifty years after the fact that I have a twin brother. No one in the family is willing to talk about it and the state continues to cover it up for them. I found out about it from a letter to my mother from her sister at the time I was born asking about the "twins", but for the fact that mother kept the letter for over fifty years I would have never known about having a twin brother. Now that I know I find all doors closed to allow me to try to locate him. Thanks aunt Helen, cousin Betty, Mom & Dad, and the state of Iowa. 😞 😡

### Elevate

Posted by: **Jackie**  
on Sun Feb 11, 2007  
1:12 pm

If you want more information about the organization that is attempting to get this bill passed, visit [www.elevate2inspire.com](http://www.elevate2inspire.com)

Elevate is a group for adoptees and current/former



foster youth to find support and to learn to express their experiences within the system through poetry and other writing, art and public speaking.

The youth in Elevate (who include the three young people featured in this story) have been training foster and adoptive parents, social workers, attorneys and judges in Des Moines for a year and a half and are now going statewide with chapters in other regions of Iowa.

The organization that is helping them get this bill passed is the Middleton Center for Children's Rights at Drake Law School.

**Reader Comment**

Posted by: **ddelly**  
on Sun Feb 11, 2007  
5:45 am

Iowa must be a great place to want to let sibling visit each other after they have been fostered and split

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GA



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published February 11, 2007

## February brings awareness to the importance of fatherhood

LANSING — Governor Jennifer M. Granholm has declared February is Responsible Fatherhood Awareness Month in Michigan to draw attention to the critical role dads play in their children's lives.

The proclamation coincides with the fifth annual Fatherhood Conference Tuesday, Feb. 6 presented by the Michigan Fatherhood Coalition and the Michigan Head Start Association at the Crowne Plaza in Romulus. Keynote speaker will be Mac Bledsoe, author of "Parenting with Dignity" and father of Dallas Cowboys quarterback Drew Bledsoe.

"Fathers provide a critical influence in their children's lives," DHS Director Marianne Udow said. "Outcomes for children are greatly improved with an active, involved father. Whether parents live together or apart, they are connected by their care and concern for their children."

Through the Proud Fathers-Proud Parents program, DHS provides funds for community agencies to deliver programming about responsible male parenting and other services designed to promote healthy marriages and co-parenting efforts. The program will disburse about \$1 million in fiscal year 2007 to 22 counties.

Proud Fathers provides 14-weeks of group-based instruction for fathers or other male caretakers of children who qualify for TANF services. Proud Parents offers a 10-week, group-based program designed for married or unmarried couples. Both programs stress the importance of nurturing relationships between parents and children as well as family self-sufficiency. In 2006, 297 parents in 19 counties participated in the two programs.

"Children with active, involved fathers have better social skills, are healthier and do better in school," said Duane Wilson, the Proud Fathers-Proud Parents program coordinator. "Our programs help men find healthy, positive ways to interact with their children and the children's mothers. They become the best dads they can be."

For more information about the Fifth Annual Fatherhood Conference, go to

[www.michiganfatherhood.org](http://www.michiganfatherhood.org) For more information about the Department of Human Services, go to [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs).

— *From the Department of Human Services.*

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FEBRUARY 09, 2007

## **Michigan Fatherhood Coalition 5th Annual Fatherhood Conference**

### **An Uplifting Experience**

On Tuesday the 6th of February I was privileged to attend the 5th Annual Fatherhood Conference for the State of Michigan put on by the Michigan Fatherhood Coalition in conjunction with the Michigan Head Start Association and let me tell you that there were some things that took place there that the rest of the America could learn from!

### **Overcoming the Obstacles with Dedication and Preparation**

First of all, the conference took place on a date that saw most of the Detroit area schools closed because of the extremely cold (-20) temperatures and yet the room was completely full of people who came seeking to make Fathers a more significant part of families all across Michigan! The fact that so many people braved the weather to attend the conference in itself was quite amazing because it showed the depth of the commitment of the people of Michigan. This conference was also a testament to the Head Start Communications and Meeting Coordinator, Jennifer Nottingham, and her extremely well planned and promoted conference!

### **People from All Over Michigan**

Next, the conference brought together people from all over the state of Michigan as was evidenced when they began to give out some awards and do some drawings for door prizes... the most heated interchange came when they were attempting to give away some money for lunch to the participant who traveled the longest distance to attend to attend the conference. It became obvious that MANY of the attendants came from long distances to get to the conference! This wonderful and extremely educational conference truly was a meeting that reached out to people from all parts of the state and not just the Detroit Area, where the conference was held.

### **Men!**

The next thing that hit me was the ratio of men to women at the conference. It would be my rough estimate that there were three times as many men at the conference as there were women! "Now, what is odd about this?" you might ask. Since the conference was called a "Fathering Conference", why is it odd to have men there? Well, I have some experience with conferences of this nature and it has been my experience that often the conferences held on Fatherhood are often populated by female workers who are trying to get men involved.

OBVIOUSLY, the State of Michigan has already reached the fathers! Yes, there many female Head Start Counselors and Social Workers in attendance, as well they should be, but it was so gratifying to see that those Head Start Workers, regardless of gender, *had already reached so many fathers and had included them in the conference.*

A few years ago I attended the New York State Child Abuse Conference and there was not one person out of the eight hundred in attendance, who had any history of child abuse! The conference was attended only by the people attempting to solve the problem and that struck me as odd. Should the conference not attract at least some of the people that they were attempting to reach?

### **An Impressive Conference**

Suffice it to say that I was impressed that the Fatherhood Conference had attracted many fathers and it was my impression that those men in attendance were learning the tools that they needed to become leaders and activists on their own behalf!

### **Michigan Fatherhood Coalition**

Next, and along the same line of reasoning, the Co-Sponsor of the Conference was a group called Michigan Fatherhood Coalition. Now, let me tell you, that group was unique in my experience. I don't know any way to say this other than to just share my personal experience as I travel and meet people from all parts of America. Unfortunately, it has been my personal experience that most of the fathering groups that I have come in contact with have had some kind of a chip on their shoulder.

Many of the fathering groups that I have come in contact with, have had as their goal a change in the child custody laws of America. This change may need to take place and many of the agencies have some very good, and sound reasons for seeking those changes, but the Michigan Fatherhood Coalition seemed so different to me. As I met the men at this conference it seemed that they were there simply to learn how to become better fathers!

It became even more obvious to me what the Michigan Fatherhood Coalition was all about when I met with a group of their Board of Directors and members following the conference. While they too might see the need for some changes in father's rights in custody cases, that was certainly not their main focus! ***These men have formed their Coalition for the purpose of reestablishing the role of the strong father in the American home!*** Man, was that exciting for me to see! Strong men standing up and saying that they want to be leaders in teaching all fathers how to be strong leaders for their children! WOW!

### **A Learning Experience!**

I was invited to attend the conference as a keynote speaker... and I left feeling like I had learned a great deal from a bunch of strong men! I had come in contact with a bunch of strong fathers building positive change for the children of Michigan.

I left with an overwhelming observation... “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if every state in the country had a Fatherhood Coalition of strong dads, just like Michigan, who were working to bring strong fathers back into every home in America?”

**February 12, 2007****EDITORIAL**

## **Passing the Buck on Health Care**

President Bush's new budget would extend the administration's warped priorities deep into the realm of federally supported health care programs. The administration long ago sacrificed any meaningful domestic agenda to finance tax cuts for the wealthy and its reckless war in Iraq. The White House's reckless determination to make the tax cuts permanent is now driving it to slash domestic spending in health and other vital programs.

Instead of trying to address the underlying problems of escalating health care costs, Mr. Bush's strategy is to cut services or shift more of the bill to states, health care providers and individuals.

In the Medicare program, which covers health care for Americans aged 65 and over, the administration would find most of its savings by slowing the annual increase in reimbursements for services, forcing hospitals and other providers to absorb the burden. Given Medicare's precarious financial straits, the package appears broadly acceptable.

The real outrage is that the administration has not proposed comparable reductions in the large overpayments — roughly 12 percent more per patient — made to private managed care plans that enroll Medicare beneficiaries. The budget would also phase out Medicare bad-debt payments, forcing hospitals to swallow beneficiaries' unpaid bills.

The budget also looks to save money by eliminating inflation indexing so that as incomes rise, so would the number of people required to pay higher premiums. Although this is a sneaky way to raise premiums, it is hard to argue with the notion that better-off beneficiaries should pay more to help rescue a financially strained program.

What seems counterproductive is Mr. Bush's plan to lower federal matching funds for Medicaid administration — forcing the states to find more of their own funds or sacrifice good management and oversight. More worrisome is his plan to cut back on state programs that insure the young.

The most shortsighted restrictions would come in the highly acclaimed State Children's Health Insurance Program, which uses federal matching funds to provide coverage for low- and moderate-income children who are not quite poor enough to qualify for Medicaid. The program has been enormously successful in reducing the number of uninsured children. Yet now the administration wants to reduce its matching rate and limit enrollment to children in households earning no more than twice the federal poverty level. That would undercut programs in 16 states that have expanded coverage to children above that level.

Although the administration's budget would grant the children's program a small \$5 billion increase spread over five years, that's less than half, and possibly only a third, of the amount needed just to maintain current enrollments and participation rates. This is too high a price to pay for more tax cuts and Mr. Bush's ill-managed presidency.

Feb 10, 6:48 AM EST

# Medicaid Cuts Could Affect Students

By KEVIN FREKING  
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON(AP) -- Democrats have made it clear: They don't support recommendations from President Bush that would shave an estimated \$77 billion from government health programs for seniors and the poor. But Bush doesn't need lawmakers' support for some of the changes that he wants to make to Medicare and Medicaid. He could get about \$23 billion in savings over the next five years by issuing new federal regulations.

Students are among those who could be hit by the regulatory changes.

School districts get reimbursed for arranging speech and physical therapy for Medicaid-eligible students. For example, when a student with autism gets speech therapy, the school can seek reimbursement for scheduling the therapy, confirming it gets done and transporting the student to the therapist, said Mary Kusler of the American Association of School Administrators.

The president's regulatory proposal would eliminate Medicaid reimbursement for those services, she said. The administration estimates the savings at \$3.6 billion over five years.

Kusler said students would still get the therapy needed to help them learn - schools have no choice in the matter. However, they may have to cut back other programs to offset the loss of federal funding.

"This would transfer the burden onto local school districts and local taxpayers," Kusler said.

George Wilson, superintendent for public schools in Monroe County, Ky., said federal reimbursements connected to therapy are crucial to helping his district pay for school nurses.

"The kids that need the nurses the most will be hurt the most when they're not available," Wilson said. "We certainly would beg that they not eliminate our ability to bill for those services."

Medicaid is the federal-state partnership that provides health coverage for about 55 million poor people. The federal government will spend more than \$200 billion on it this

year, while states will spend about \$150 billion.

Under the Bush plan, Medicaid cuts also would hit:

- Teaching hospitals, \$1.8 billion.

- Publicly owned hospitals and nursing homes, \$5 billion.

- Providers of rehabilitation services for the mentally and developmentally disabled, \$2.3 billion.

Health care providers acknowledge they may have a much harder time stopping the regulations than they would any bills in Congress.

"Clearly, the president's budget has met with extensive skepticism on Capitol Hill. Clearly, the budget moving forward is highly unlikely," said Tom Nickels of the American Hospital Association. "As a result, initiatives that can be done through regulation are very troublesome."

Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt referred to the changes during congressional hearings last week as "savers." He notes that Medicare is expected to grow 6.5 percent annually during the next five years, while Medicaid will grow at a 7.3 percent clip. The regulations would barely dent those growth rates.

But those assurances do not comfort Dr. Spencer Foreman, president of Montefiore Medical Center in New York City. The elimination of Medicaid payments for medical education would mainly affect about 400 hospitals, he notes.

His hospital, the third-largest teaching hospital in the country, stands to lose tens of millions of dollars annually. The loss of money would force him to lay off staff and would make it harder to train future doctors, Foreman said.

"We've now come to the conclusion - everybody, the government, the industry - that the country is facing a major doctor shortage in the next 25 years, particularly in specialty-trained physicians," Foreman said. "Now, in order to save a few bucks, we're going to gut the facilities that train these physicians. How does that make sense?"

The regulation on therapy services for students has not yet been issued. Nor has the regulation on graduate medical education. That's not the case with a proposed rule that would affect government-owned hospitals and nursing homes.

Medicaid officials say it's unfair that some states generate extra federal funding without putting up more of their own money. The states make large payments to county-owned hospitals and nursing homes, even as counties are required to return some of the money to the state.



The Bush administration wants to crack down on such transfers by limiting Medicaid reimbursement so that it cannot exceed the cost of providing a particular service. The American Hospital Association says about 1,200 hospitals, mostly in rural or inner-city areas, would be affected.

Nickels said the association doesn't dispute the need to do away with accounting procedures designed to generate more federal dollars. He said the government is already clamping down on such payments.

However, to say that publicly owned hospitals cannot charge more than the cost of providing a service puts them in a difficult spot, Nickels said.

When hospitals treat patients with private insurance, they charge enough to offset the lower payments they get when they treat the poor and uninsured. But many public hospitals serve a high percentage of the poor and uninsured, so they don't have a way to offset Medicaid's lower payments.

"These are public facilities that need to be able to revamp themselves and improve. Technology is a big thing in health care," Nickels said. "We're going to say to these hospitals, you don't get additional dollars to invest in information technology."

The administration has emphasized that the proposed change is about fairness and treating states equally.

Medicaid also covers a range of mental health services that can help people get therapy in a community setting and avoid costly institutional care. The administration wants to clarify what rehabilitation services Medicaid will cover. The savings are estimated at \$2.3 billion over five years.

Dennis Smith, a senior official at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, told lawmakers previously that the definition of rehabilitation services was so broad there was a risk of abuse.

However, just how the administration will clarify the definitions is a mystery. The budget provides little clue. Health care providers say they have no idea of what the regulations would say. Medicaid officials declined to elaborate.

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Article published Feb 9, 2007  
Man faces charges in meth bust  
Kimball resident charged with running lab in garage of adult foster care home

By SHANNON MURPHY  
Times Herald

A 41-year-old Kimball Township man was arraigned Thursday on charges he was operating a meth lab from a garage at an adult foster-care home.

Raymond Archie Laturno is charged with possessing a controlled substance, second offense, two counts of carrying a concealed weapon and driving with a suspended license. He was arraigned by St. Clair County District Court Magistrate Stephen Thomas.

A preliminary examination is scheduled Feb. 20.

Police discovered the methamphetamine lab about 3 a.m. Wednesday in the garage outside Pine Hill Adult Foster Care, 6531 Lapeer Road. The *Times Herald* learned the lab was on the foster-care home property through a post in the StoryChat forum at thetimesherald.com.

Police found the lab after Laturno was arrested Tuesday on outstanding warrants for possession of methamphetamine and assault with a dangerous weapon.

Laturno had meth ingredients and a gun in his possession when he was arrested. Police said they don't expect to charge anyone else at the home in connection with the meth lab.

Kellie Lauer, owner of Pine Hill Adult Foster Care, said Laturno was her boyfriend, but she didn't know he was doing anything illegal in the home's garage. She said he didn't live there, although he listed Pine Hill as his address in court records.

Lauer said she let police into the garage early Wednesday. Inside the garage, Lauer said police found a small padlocked toolbox from which they took items. She said she didn't know what was in the box.

Lauer said the state Department of Human Services now is investigating the foster home. Department officials did not return a phone message left Thursday afternoon.

Lauer said she has operated the foster home for about two years, but elderly people, some with mental illnesses, have lived there for several years.

"These people (that live here) are just as innocent as I am," Lauer said. "I'm real worried about it."

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Article published Feb 10, 2007  
Residents of home removed  
State agency acts after raid finds meth lab

By SHANNON MURPHY  
Times Herald

**KIMBALL TWP.**- A state agency moved all residents out of an adult foster-care home Friday after police said a meth lab was found on the property Wednesday.

The state Department of Human Services ordered residents be moved while an investigation continues into Pine Hill Adult Foster Care home, 6531 Lapeer Road.

Raymond Archie Laturno Jr., 41, of Kimball Township was arraigned Thursday for operating the lab from a garage on the property. He also faces weapons charges.

"To ensure the safety of the residents, all of them will be moved out today," said Maureen Sorbet, a spokeswoman with the state Department of Human Services.

She said the agency has had people at the home for the past few days conducting an investigation and working to find other places for the residents to live. Pine Hill is licensed for 14 people. Sorbet was not sure how many people were living there Friday.

Pine Hill owner Kellie Lauer on Thursday said Laturno was her boyfriend and that she and residents did not know anything illegal was going on in the garage.

She could not be reached for comment Friday afternoon. People at the home declined to comment.

Sorbet said Lauer's license has not been revoked. This is the fourth time in about a year Pine Hill has been under state scrutiny.

The Department of Human Services investigates foster-care homes any time a complaint is filed.

Since January 2006, the department has investigated several allegations at Pine Hill, including claims that a member of the household had a criminal record. According to the complaint, an investigator found that a member of the household with a criminal record failed to notify the state that he or she was living at the home. The complaint does not state who the person was.

In November, Pine Hill again was investigated after a complaint was filed saying a resident was not being cared for properly. The investigation found no violation.

In September, a complaint was filed that stated Lauer and a live-in friend were drinking and using illegal drugs and the home was unclean.

The inspector found no evidence of drinking or drugs but found violations of some unsanitary conditions, such as a dirty bathroom and a yard with broken equipment, unused cars, refuse and litter.

Sorbet said during an investigation the owner typically is asked to put forth an action plan to fix any problems. An investigator then follows up at the site.

"We have licensing people that go in and investigate specific complaints to see whether or not the provider is out of compliance with program rules and regulations," she said. "Depending on what they find, they can take any range of action, up to suspension or revocation of the license."

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February 12, 2007

## Mich. food aid soars

Record 1 in 9 seek food stamps, other assistance

**Charlie Cain / Detroit News Lansing Bureau**

**LANSING** -- A record 1.19 million Michiganians -- nearly one of every nine residents -- are getting government help in putting food on their tables, as a result of the state's anemic economy and the massive downsizing of the domestic auto industry.

That's the most recipients here in the program's 40-year history and more than in all but five states. The cost of providing the food for struggling Michigan families soared to \$1.24 billion last year, up 145 percent from just five years earlier.

And the government estimates that more than 300,000 additional Michiganians who are not receiving assistance would probably qualify for it, if they applied.

"We've seen a pretty steady climb since December 2000 and it's gone up by a few thousand cases each and every month," said Maureen Sorbet, spokeswoman for the Michigan Department of Human Services, which administers the program. "There must be a time when we reach the saturation point, but it's difficult to determine when that will be."

While food stamp use mushrooms, the number of people relying on nongovernment food banks, pantries and shelters for nutritional needs also is rising.

The Food Bank Council of Michigan says more than 1 million people got in excess of 75 million pounds of free food from charitable and religious groups last year.

Jane Marshall, the council's executive director and a seasoned soldier in the war on hunger, said the situation is bleak.

"Our agencies say there is more demand, more working-poor families and more people who are coming in for the first time ever," Marshall said.

"This year, I think demand could go up dramatically, and in places like Macomb County, Livingston County and other areas you wouldn't think would have issues with resources. I don't like doom and gloom, but things are getting worse."

State Sen. Jason Allen, R- Traverse City, introduced legislation in Lansing recently to extend tax credits to people donating food to pantries and shelters. Currently, a taxpayer can receive a tax credit of up to \$100 for cash contributions, but receives no credit for donating food items. Similar legislation failed to win approval last year and, given the state's budget difficulties, the measure faces an uncertain future.

The federal government funds the food stamp program 100 percent and pays half the administrative costs. The remainder is covered by the states. In Michigan, that amounted to \$93 million last year.

Last year, it cost more than \$29 billion to feed 26 million people across the nation. Michigan trails just Texas, California, New York, Illinois and Florida in terms of both households and individuals receiving food stamps. Michigan ranks seventh in total cost.

### Aid boost appreciated

Marilynn Hardin, an 81-year-old Detroit widow, swallowed her pride in November and applied for food assistance. She now gets a monthly allotment of \$126.

"I didn't want to put in for it at first, thinking 'I'm managing.' That's what a lot of seniors do. We hate to feel we're getting aid," she said.

When told she was approved, Hardin was "surprised and very appreciative. I'm not a heavy eater, so it's enough for me. I still use my coupons out of the newspaper.

"And with the help, instead of buying two cartons of yogurt, I can buy the whole eight-pack. It's really made a difference."

Belinda Dawson, a 42-year-old Detroit, has been receiving food assistance for almost a year following open heart surgery. Her \$200 monthly allotment was trimmed to \$60 after she started to collect an \$800 monthly disability check in August.

She said the food money isn't enough to cover the entire bill; she dips into money that should be paying for her many medications to buy food.

"The food assistance helps because you don't have to go into your pocket so much," Dawson said. "But it's still tough."

### Varied reasons for rise in use

Janet Cushman, food assistance program director in Michigan, said the food stamp program is intended to supplement rather than cover all food costs. The growth in recipients is the result of a number of factors, she said.

Michigan's wobbly economy is a major factor, of course. The state's December jobless rate of 7.1 percent trailed only Mississippi at 7.5 percent. Nationally, the unemployment rate was 4.5 percent.

But rule changes have also increased participation. For instance, Michigan got a waiver from the federal government three years ago to allow able-bodied adults without children to receive food assistance without time restrictions. Previously, the limit was three months.

While people call them food stamps, those getting assistance actually receive a "bridge card," which resembles a credit card.

"That helped to eliminate some of the stigma where a person had to pay with coupons at the supermarket checkout line," Cushman said.

A rule change in 2000 allowed people making up to 200 percent of the poverty level to receive food assistance. The old rule was 130

percent. Under 2007 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines, that figure is \$20,650 for a family of four. Other changes dealt with assets and deductions.

For instance, owning a home and car are not factored in when deciding how much assistance a person can receive. And costs for health care, child support, shelter, utilities and medical expenses can be deducted from a family's income when applying for help. Changes under consideration in Washington would not count an individual's retirement and savings accounts as assets when determining food stamp eligibility.

Cushman said a family of four with a net monthly income of \$800 after deductions could receive \$278 in monthly food assistance. A family of four with a net monthly income of \$1,500 could receive \$68 a month. A homeless person with no income could get \$155 a month.

Cushman said the state continues with outreach programs to encourage people to apply for food assistance. The federal government estimates that only 66 percent of those eligible in Michigan are actually receiving benefits.

"So there's still a lot of room for growth" in recipients, she said.

*You can reach Charlie Cain at (517) 371-3660 or [ccain@detnews.com](mailto:ccain@detnews.com).*

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#### **How to get help**

Contact the Center for Social Justice, a nonprofit advocacy organization that focuses on hunger issues, at (800) 481-4989, or on its Web site, [foodstamphelp.org](http://foodstamphelp.org). The Web site has a calculator to help determine eligibility and the amount of aid.

Visit the state's Web site at [michigan.gov/dhs](http://michigan.gov/dhs) and click on "assistance programs."

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Feb 12, 7:21 AM EST

## **Record numbers in Michigan seek food stamps, other assistance**

LANSING, Mich. (AP) -- About 1.9 million residents in economically struggling Michigan are receiving government food assistance, the highest number here in the more than 40-year history of the federal food stamp program and more than in all but five states.

The cost of providing the food stamps for Michigan families grew to \$1.24 billion last year, up 145 percent from just five years earlier. And the government estimates that more than 300,000 residents who are not receiving assistance could qualify for it.

"We've seen a pretty steady climb since December 2000 and it's gone up by a few thousand cases each and every month," Maureen Sorbet, spokeswoman for the Michigan Department of Human Services, told The Detroit News for a Monday story. "There must be a time when we reach the saturation point, but it's difficult to determine when that will be."

The numbers of people relying on nongovernment food banks, pantries and shelters for food needs are also growing. The Food Bank Council of Michigan says more than 1 million people received in excess of 75 million pounds of free food from charitable and religious groups last year.

"Our agencies say there is more demand, more working-poor families and more people who are coming in for the first time ever," said Jane Marshall, the council's executive director.

The trend is being driven by massive downsizing in the state's auto industry and the disappearance of manufacturing jobs. Michigan's December unemployment rate of 7.1 percent was second-highest to Mississippi's 7.5 percent and trailed the national average of 4.5 percent.

Rule changes, such as a 2000 rule that increased the income threshold for food assistance, also have increased participation.

The federal government pays 100 percent of the food stamp program and half of its administrative costs. The remainder is covered by states. In Michigan, that was \$93 million in 2006.

February 10, 2007

## High heat bills send chills across Mich.

Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

The highest bills of the heating season are arriving in mailboxes, slapping Metro Detroiters even harder than the brittle winds.

And with this week's deep freeze not yet reflected in utility statements, next month's bills could bring even bigger surprises.

Although the cost of natural gas is down this year and winter temperatures were mild through mid-January, the season's sudden change is bringing sticker shock to many, some of whom already are struggling to make ends meet.

Emma Allen-Lowe opened her bill a few days ago and almost fell over when she saw she owes \$350 for January.

"I am here by myself so I wonder why my bill is so high," said Allen-Lowe, 87, of Detroit. "I try to keep the heat as low as I can. I sit around in a sweater, trying to keep warm."

Home heating will cost the average Michigan residential natural gas customer \$191 for January, up from \$144 in December, according to the Michigan Public Service Commission. For many, the jump is even more -- DTE gas customers will pay an average of \$210, compared to \$130 in December. Propane and home heating oil users, who combined make up less than 10 percent of households, also can expect a big jump between their December and January bills, according to projections from the PSC.

Allen-Lowe isn't sure yet how she will pay her bill.

"I was thinking about calling (the gas company) to split it up," she said. "With paying taxes, I just don't have the money right now to do the things that I need to."

### Economic climate is no help

Many Michiganians are struggling to pay their heat bills this winter because of the state's battered economy. Some are dipping into their savings, asking companies for payment plans or even turning to social service agencies for help.

"There are still a lot of people who are still struggling, trying to pay off last winter's bills," said Kathleen Walgren of The Heat and Warmth Fund, which helps low-income residents who have shut-off notices pay their heat bills.

Last year, THAW gave \$9.3 million to 8,600 Michigan households and the agency is on track to help at least as many this year.

Paying heat bills this time of year is often challenging for most Metro Detroiters, but some people are especially worried because of this week's cold snap, which plunged temperatures into single digits -- and below zero -- for four days.

"Our bill for last billing period was \$205 -- and I can hardly imagine what my bill will be next month," said Stephanie Jasky, 42, of Troy. "I'm scared to death because we are trying to hold on by our fingernails. I know the worst is yet to come."

Jasky's husband, Randy, was laid off from his carpentry job two years ago. He has since started his own remodeling business while she works part time as a paralegal. Together, they are raising two children and it's not been easy with the new business. They have had to choose which bills take priority.

"We haven't paid the electric," Jasky said. "We're putting that off for now."

The price of natural gas has decreased 12 percent from last year's heating season. Since temperatures were above normal in December and much of January, consumers used less gas, according to Len Singer, spokesman for Michigan Consolidated Gas. The cost of gas is also lower in January, which should offset the below-normal temperatures when people likely used more gas.

### Sacrifices made to pay bills

Don't tell that to Nancy Brunson, a Detroit resident who approached THAW this week for help with her heat bill for the first time.

Brunson and her husband are retired, but both returned to the work force to make ends meet. Her husband recently lost his post-retirement job and they are raising their 13-year-old grandson, so they had trouble paying for heat.

"It's very difficult paying our utilities," Brunson said. "I was trying to avoid getting any help at all but it seems like I can't avoid it."

Roy Patterson of Ferndale hasn't yet got his bill but he's dreading its arrival since he's been unemployed for seven months and his wife is on a medical leave.

"We keep the heat set at 68 no matter what," said Patterson, 43. "We throw blankets from the dollar store all over the house. If you spend a buck for a blanket, that's much cheaper than spending an extra \$60 to \$70 a month for heat."

He said they'll have to dip into his savings to pay their bill, but it will get paid. "You have to have heat."

*You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or [kkozlowski@detnews.com](mailto:kkozlowski@detnews.com).*

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### **Want to help?**

The Heat and Warmth Fund's fourth annual Radiothon with WWJ Newsradio 950 ends today.

Donations can be made by calling the hot line at (888) 579-4950 or by visiting the Boll Family YMCA, 1401 Broadway in Detroit.

Donations can also be made at [www.thawfund.org](http://www.thawfund.org) or by bidding on items at the online auction at [www.wwj.com](http://www.wwj.com).



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Article published Feb 10, 2007

Jail aims to put child-support violators to work

Work-release program includes help finding regular jobs

By SHANNON MURPHY  
Times Herald

St. Clair County officials hope a new program will free up bed space at the county jail and help some inmates find jobs.

The Jail Alternative Program, which will be overseen by St. Clair County Friend of the Court, will allow certain inmates sentenced for not paying child support to serve their sentences outside jail.

The program will work in conjunction with the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Department by having some of the inmates work at county parks while on work release from the jail, said Susan Borovich, director of Friend of the Court. While the inmates will not be paid, they will be required to look for a job through Michigan Works while in the program.

"The end result, we believe, is going to instill more pride in the person that's not paying child support," Borovich said. "And it will allow them time to find a job, so the end result is they will make regular child-support payments."

Officials hope to start the program in the spring or early summer.

Costs for the program, which would include hiring an on-site supervisor, buying a van to transport the inmates, uniforms, and other items such as a radio or cell phone for the supervisor, would be paid for with federal money through the Friend of the Court division and money from the county parks millage. The cost of the program is not yet known.

To be eligible for the program, an inmate must first make a minimum payment to the custodial parent, the amount of which will be determined by a judge; have no history of violent offenses, sexual assault or personal-protection orders; and be someone who had been making regular payments but stopped because of something such as losing a job.

Officials envision the program working like this:

Participants will meet at 8:30 a.m. daily at the county jail where they will be transported to a park and work until about 2:30 p.m. After that, they will be required to go to Michigan Works where they will try to find a job, work on a résumé or learn job skills.

When the Michigan Works office closes, they would return to their homes.

"I think it's a great initiative," county Administrator Shaun Groden said. "It shows real creativity and acknowledgement that we need to manage our (jail) bed space and look at who is in jail and why."

St. Clair County jail administrator Maj. Tom Torrey said as of Thursday morning, there were 34 people in jail for not paying child support. He said about 20 likely would be eligible to participate in the program.

Torrey anticipates the program will free up bed space that can be used for violent offenders or rented to federal inmates. He hopes to expand the program to other nonviolent offenders.

"I've always taken the stance that we have too many people in jail that are only here because they don't have money," he said. "This would open up beds for people who are a threat or to federal prisoners to bring in money for the general fund."

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# THE DAILY Reporter

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## Scott-Farnsworth: It is time for everyone to speak out on this issue

[Print Page](#)

To the Editor:

This year the state of Michigan is facing a budget shortfall and is looking for ways to cut the budget. Through last year's approved budget the federal government has decided to cut the Title IV-D welfare incentive payments that is paid to the states when they create a non-custodial parents.

This reduction in incentive payments is a part of Michigan's current budget shortfall and should be looked at as an opportunity to move families ahead in our state. This can be accomplished by eliminating the free welfare service provided by the Friend of the Court to divorcing/unwed parents who have the means to support themselves. This will reduce the total size of Michigan's government operations and allow the remaining FOC employees to focus on collecting support from parents that have truly abandoned their children. To move children ahead the state should also adopt a presumption of joint physical custody law so that both parents can spend substantially equal time supporting and raising their children and reduce the need to pay support through the state system.

It is time for everyone to speak out on this issue; parents raise children, not money!

Darrick Scott-Farnsworth

Augusta

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**Dems Using Local Meetings To Promote Credits**

MIRS, Friday, February 9, 2007

House Democrats are using local town hall meetings to tell people about the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

The EITC is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income workers. Republicans agreed to pass the EITC as part of an agreement to get the minimum wage exemption bill passed last year.

Reps. Barb **BYRUM** (D-Onondaga) and Mary **VALENTINE** (D-Norton Shores) both sent out press releases announcing that they are going to town hall meetings to discuss the exemption in their respective districts.



## Groups team up to help needy

Saturday, February 10, 2007

**DENISE FORD-MITCHELL**

### **THE SAGINAW NEWS**

The Partnership Center and Saginaw Metro Ministries are pooling their resources.

Low-income families and individuals will reap the benefits of the nonprofit Christian organizations, says Georgann M. Hemker, 55, executive director of the Partnership Center, 122 S. Hamilton in Saginaw.

The center, split in two divisions, offers community assistance such as emergency funds for rent, relocations, utility and water payments and deposits, life-empowerment classes, health products and advocacy.

Saginaw Metro Ministries is a coalition of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America churches in the county.

"The arrangement really broadens the scope of what we can do for people in need struggling to survive on very little money," Hemker explained.

Each month, the center's volunteers receive more than 1,000 calls from residents seeking assistance, and it doles out \$12,000 to \$15,000 annually, she said. The need far outweighs the help available, she added.

The services were covered under the Fresh Start Partnership, established in 1995 by several Saginaw Catholic churches. That undertaking previously was housed at SS. Simon and Jude Catholic Church, 2395 S. Outer Drive in Buena Vista Township.

In 2001, the Partnership Center's thrift shop and Fresh Start Partnership merged. Officials moved the Buena Vista Township effort into the 136-year-old four-story building in Old Saginaw City that housed the thrift store.

Most of the center's clients are referred by social organizations such as the Red Cross and the Department of Human Services, formerly the Family Independence Agency, as well as by churches and fire departments, Hemker said.

Donations from churches, civic groups, businesses and individuals fund the organization's \$200,000 budget.

"We don't get any state or federal assistance," Hemker said. "So when the Rev. Scott (Sedlar) from Ascension Lutheran Church called and asked if they could join the partnership, it was such a blessing for us.

"Apparently, people were going from church to church, and (leaders) wanted to make sure they were good stewards of the money people were giving them. They thought this was the easiest way to go," she said.

"The majority of the calls we receive are people who need help with Consumers Energy and rent. There are so many people out there not making enough money to pay both. So they will pay all of one and a little of the other, if they have any (money) left at all."

Hemker understands firsthand how difficult such situations can become.

"I was unemployed for a while, so I know how hard it is to go out every day and come back with nothing to show for your efforts. You go through that enough, and you do start to feel hopeless, especially when you can't afford the little, basic things needed to survive.

"It does get tough and becomes hard to hold your head up. But I counsel people not to give up. They have to have hope, or they become ghosts."

Hemker plans to enhance and develop new life-skills classes.

"We may see a couple of hundred people (per year) by appointment. And that number is growing. Right now, there is a big need for Michigan identification cards and birth certificates. You can't cash a check, can't get employment, can't get into state or federal buildings or receive subsidized housing without identification," she said.

"People can come here, and we'll do the paperwork here and pay the fees for them to get the birth certificates. But they have to be from a low-income household."

Fees can range from \$10 to more than \$45 for notarized birth certificates, Hemker said.

"Unfortunately, you can't get a Michigan identification card without a birth certificate. And sometimes, it takes us awhile to figure out which form of identification is best for the client, given their particular situation.

"Another problem is no state, including Michigan, will accept prison identification cards as identification. Even though the cards have the name and photos right on them, valid identification cards must have a signature on them, and the prison cards don't.

"It is very frustrating for clients trying to get assistance when they have so many hurdles in front of them. But we encourage them not to give up," Hemker added.

The Partnership Center's thrift store is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The community assistance arm of the center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday by appointment only.

"Our goal is to keep the family unit stable. Once people have to temporarily relocate because of a crisis, that's when things start to really fall apart," she said.

To make donations to the Partnership Center, call Hemker from 8:30a.m. to 5p.m. weekdays at 249-4290.v

Denise Ford-Mitchell is a staff writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach her at 776-9668.

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### **President Bush Releases FY 2008 Budget Proposal**

On February 5, President Bush released his fiscal year (FY) 2008 budget proposal. For the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), as in the past several years, the budget proposal focuses on reforming entitlement programs, including Medicare and Medicaid. Although the FY 2008 repropose several Medicaid proposals from previous years, the administration includes several new proposals with significant cost savings potential. Unlike in the past, the administration's budget includes far-reaching cost savings measures in the Medicare program.

The president's budget includes legislative proposals that would result in \$65.6 billion in savings in Medicare and \$13 billion in Medicaid over the next five years. In addition, the proposed federal regulations are projected to save an additional \$10.2 billion in Medicare and \$12.7 billion in Medicaid over the next five years.

With respect to Medicaid, the FY 2008 budget seeks to achieve savings with changes such as reducing administrative match rates to 50 percent, lowering the match rate for targeted case management services to 50 percent, restricting payment for Graduate Medical Education, regulating Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) payments, and reforming rehabilitation services, among other changes. In addition, the budget includes reauthorization policies for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) that differ on several fronts from current statute.

The budget includes \$1.2 billion in FY 2008 for SCHIP and \$5.93 billion over five years. The administration proposes to reauthorize SCHIP for five years. The budget proposes that federal funds be used to cover *only* those targeted low-income children currently enrolled in states' programs under 200 percent of federal poverty level (FPL) budget plan also notes that the administration will seek authority to target SCHIP funds more efficiently to states with the most need. During a briefing with reporters today, Leslie Norwalk, administrator at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), stated that states would be reimbursed for current enrollees at or above 200 percent of FPL at the regular Medicaid match rate, not the enhanced SCHIP rate. In addition, she indicated that states currently covering adults would have these populations "grandfathered" into the program. For FY 2008, CMS has proposed strengthening health care quality across the SCHIP program. States will collect measures related to access to care, asthma medications, and child wellness visits.

With respect to Food Stamps Program (FSP), the FY 2008 budget repeats several proposals from earlier years. The first would be a change in current FSP categorical eligibility policy under which states could choose this option only for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance and Supplement Security Income (SSI). Current options allow states to extend categorical eligibility to those who also receive certain TANF non-cash benefits, for example child care benefits and employment support services. The budget would also exclude all retirement accounts when determining program eligibility; currently in most states, some retirement savings such as Individual Retirement Accounts can disqualify a household. The proposal would cost \$44 million in FY 2008 and a total of \$556 million over five years. The proposal would implement this policy nationwide; it is already used in certain states that exclude these accounts under their TANF programs and have adopted an FSP option to extend those TANF policies to the FSP. The budget would also exclude special military pay when determining FSP benefits for families of deployed members of the armed forces; this change would cost \$1 million in FY 2008 and \$5 million over five years.

Another proposal would terminate the Commodity Supplement Food Program (CSFP). The CSFP provides food packages to about 450,000 persons monthly, primarily those age 60 and over but also including low-income pregnant and post-partum women, infants, and children up to age 6.

The budget would also make three changes that would add penalties for, or restrictions on, states with respect to quality control-related administrative activities. The administration would charge states 5 percent of their administrative costs if the state is more than 50 percent above the national negative error rate for two consecutive years; remove the new investment option for states sanctioned for improper payments for three consecutive years and require states to pay their "at-risk" amount for the second year as well the entire third-year liability amount; and hold states accountable for all overissuances resulting from widespread systemic errors, such as large-scale automated system malfunctions.

Consistent with the administration's budget proposals since FY 2004, the FY 2008 budget again seeks legislation to allow states to choose an alternative funding scheme for foster care. States choosing to participate would receive funds in the form of flexible grants. A goal of the program would be to act as an incentive to create innovative child welfare plans with a strong emphasis on prevention and family support. Participating states would face fewer administrative burdens, but would still be required to uphold the child protections outlined in the Adoption and Safe Families Act, agree to maintain existing levels of state investment in child welfare programs (maintenance of effort), and continue to participate in the Child and Family Services Reviews. The proposal would provide access to the TANF Contingency Fund, from

which states could receive additional funding under certain circumstances if a severe foster care crisis were to arise, at a projected cost of \$34 million over five years. A \$30 million set-aside would be available for Indian tribes, and a one-third of 1 percent set-aside would be available for monitoring and technical assistance of state foster care programs. The federal cost for this program option is projected to be \$8 million in FY 2008 and \$6 million over five years, with an expected savings to the federal government of \$1 million over 10 years.

The administration's budget maintains the present level of funding for the TANF block grant. The proposal includes the elimination of a separate, higher work rate for two-parent families and would hold these families to a 50 percent work rate. This proposal is identified as cost-neutral, increasing its opportunity for passage. It also extends Supplemental Grants to States through 2010 at a level of \$319 million. The Deficit Reduction Act had extended the grants for only a three-year period. The Administration for Children and Families also received \$11 million for the prevention of improper payments in several of the agency's programs, including TANF. The funds will be used to establish error rates in the program.

The administration's budget cuts funding to Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) by \$500 million, bringing its present funding level of \$1.7 billion to \$1.2 billion. The budget eliminates the Community Services Block Grant, a cut of \$630 million. The justification used is that the program lacks national performance measures, does not award funds on a competitive basis, and does not hold grantees accountable for program results. And, the administration's budget proposal reduces discretionary Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program funding by \$379 million, from \$2.161 billion last year to an FY 2008 level of \$1.782 billion. Of the FY 2008 funding, \$1.5 billion is for formula grants to states, a reduction of \$480 million, and \$282 million is contingency funding, a \$100 million increase.

### **Senate Begins Consideration of FY 2007 Continuing Resolution**

On Thursday, the Senate began consideration of HJ Res. 20—the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution that would extend federal spending authority through September 30, 2007. In January, the House of Representative approved HJ Res. 20 that would provide federal funding authority for nine appropriations bill, including the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education bill. Absent Senate action, federal spending authority is set to expire on February 15. When introducing the measure, Senate Majority Leader Reid ( Nev. ) indicated that several amendments may be permitted during the Senate debate. Any changes to the House-passed measure would require the House to consider the measure again next week.

### **Administration's Health Care Proposals Come Under Fire**

After the release of the president's budget this week, HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt and other members of the Bush administration headed to Capitol Hill to testify before the Senate Finance, House Energy and Commerce, and House Ways and Means committees. Among the most contentious issues was the administration's funding and reauthorization proposals for SCHIP. Although Leavitt and members of the committees agreed on a bipartisan basis on the value of the program and the need to reauthorize SCHIP, there was significant disagreement on the funding and policy direction the administration proposed.

Leavitt stated that the administration's funding request is "adequate" to meet the needs of those currently enrolled in SCHIP. He reported that the administration proposes an additional \$4.8 billion in new money, and plans to utilize \$1.2 billion in unspent SCHIP funds in FY 2008. Speculation abounded this week on whether and how the administration may propose to shorten the timeframe that states have to spend their original allocation and change the enhanced SCHIP match for certain enrollees. Such proposals would need to be approved by Congress.

Given the projected increase in health care costs and the fact that states already are experiencing shortfalls, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Baucus (D-Mont.) and House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Dingell (D-Mich.) criticized the administration's proposal as a cut in funding. The secretary also faced tough questions on the budget's emphasis on covering children under 200 percent FPL as it could threaten coverage enrollees who fall outside this category. Members sought clarification on how the administration could maintain coverage for existing enrollees while lowering the funding match for children above 200 percent FPL and adults, including parents and pregnant women, and shortening the timeframe that states have to spend their allotments.

Senate Finance Committee members requested additional information on the president's Affordable Choices health initiatives. In response, Leavitt indicated that the administration is working with governors to provide "basic health care coverage" to more uninsured individuals. He stated that they believe a portion of states' funds currently allocated for disproportionate share hospital (DSH) payments and medical bills for the uninsured would be better invested in expanding health insurance coverage.

Members of the committees also questioned Leavitt on the timing of additional proposed Medicaid cuts given that the impact of the DRA, passed last year, is not yet fully known. Members of the House and Senate raised concerns about the impact of eliminating Medicaid payments for Graduate Medical Education (GME), the January 18, 2007, rule on intergovernmental transfers and certified public expenditures, and the implementation of the citizenship provisions of the DRA.

### **Pelosi and Reid Call for Supplemental Spending Measure for SCHIP**

On February 2, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) wrote to President Bush asking that he submit a spending proposal separate from his upcoming emergency supplemental appropriations request to cover shortfalls in funding of an estimated \$745 million SCHIP. President Bush declined the lawmakers' request in the \$93 billion emergency war spending proposal he submitted Monday to cover the remainder of 2007. However, Democrats have indicated that they may add the \$745 million when the bill comes up in the coming weeks. If allocated, the new money would keep 14 states with looming shortfalls from having to cut off coverage this year.

### **Baucus Outlines Priorities for State Children's Health Insurance Program**

On February 7, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) outlined his priorities for reauthorization of SCHIP. He noted that the administration's budget proposal is only a third of the funding that would be required to maintain coverage for the 6.2 million

children currently enrolled in SCHIP and does not provide resources to enroll any additional eligible children. Baucus has made the reauthorization of SCHIP the Committee's top health priority. His five priorities are: ensure that SCHIP receives enough funding to maintain coverage for those already in the program; support state efforts to use SCHIP to cover more children; improve the quality of health care under SCHIP; work to reach the six million uninsured children; and make certain that the number of Americans without health insurance does not increase.

Congressional authorization for the Children's Health Insurance Program expires on September 30, 2007 . Baucus says he intends for the Finance Committee to deliver a reauthorization and expansion of the program as early as this May.

#### **Senators Unsure on Confirmation of Leslie Norwalk as CMS Administrator**

After the departure of former CMS Administrator Mark McClellan last fall, the Bush administration selected Leslie Norwalk to serve as acting administrator. The Senate Finance Committee is charged with conducting the confirmation hearing for a permanent administrator. However, early indications from Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Ranking Member Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) were cool on her approval. Baucus stated that he believed that CMS needed "fresh blood" while Grassley remained vague and merely said he is still evaluating her qualifications and performance.